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QUESTIONS ON
"FIRST COMMUNION"

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COLL. CHRISTI REGIS S.J.
BIB. MAJOR
TORONTO

QUESTIONS
ON
"FIRST COMMUNION"

BY
MOTHER MARY LOYOLA

Of the Bar Convent, York

WITH AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE

BY
THE CARDINAL ARCHBISHOP OF WESTMINSTER

COLL. CHRISTI REGIS S.J.
BIB. MAJOR
TORONTO

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TO THE CATECHISTS WHO MAY USE
THIS LITTLE BOOK.

I HAVE asked Mother M. Loyola to draw up a series of questions, so as to divide her excellent Book of Preparation for First Communion into the number of lessons that the children should receive between the beginning of Lent and Sunday within the Octave of Corpus Christi, the day for the First Communion.

This Book of Instructions, and the Questions will be of use to Priests; but I have especially in mind the Sisters, Ladies of Charity, members of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, and other lay persons, Masters and Mistresses, &c., who under the direction of the clergy will teach the children in small classes, as is done in Milan, Rome, and in many places in England. I have particularly before me the Cathedral of Salford, St. Patrick's, Manchester, and St. Mary's, Bayswater, where lay teachers of the Congregation have for years rendered splendid service in the Sunday schools.

I warmly commend the system of Mother Loyola's Book, *First Communion*, because it does

not burden the children with a number of lessons to be learnt by heart, but really interests them, awakens their attention, and presents our Lord's Personality and Life to them in a way calculated to draw their affections to Him, and thus to prepare them in the most rational and human manner for the Sacrament they are to receive.

The Catechist, whether man or woman, must take pains to prepare beforehand, by carefully reading the lesson over at home and making himself thoroughly familiar with what he is going to teach—doing this in the spirit of an Apostle who is intent upon making our Lord's Life of love attractive to these children, whose future will depend entirely upon their having learnt to love and serve Him.

Whether the classes should be held in the Churches, which would seem to be the better plan, or in School-rooms, must depend upon circumstances, of which the Rector of the Mission is the best judge. In Rome the classes to this day are held in St. Peter's, where the Arch-confraternity of Christian Doctrine was established in 1607, nearly 300 years ago. This has the great advantage of cutting off this most religious act from what many regard as the drudgery of the school-room and of secular lessons.

Many Indulgences have been granted by the

Holy See to all the faithful who act as Catechists, or teach Christian Doctrine to children, whether in Church or elsewhere.

I may add just a few words of advice as to the use of the Book and of the Questions that have been drawn up, dividing it into lessons.

(1) The pages that make up a lesson should be read over to the children distinctly and slowly so that they may take it all in. When the Catechist has done this and given the meaning of what has been said in his own words, and thinks the children have grasped it, he may begin to ask them the Questions here given, helping them and encouraging them to answer in their own words.

(2) There being much matter to be learnt in each lesson, the Catechist, when he feels that the children cannot take it all in, should make a prudent selection of what is more important, omitting the rest. To give the mind on each occasion just as much as it can assimilate, and not more, is better than to overburden and fatigue the children by expecting too much of them.

(3) The extra story should be read, or, still better, told by the Catechist in his own words, as a reward for attention and good conduct.

(4) If you can get a large print, and preferably a coloured one, representing any scene in the lesson

you have been giving, show it to the whole class after they have mastered the lesson, and make some of the children point out the different objects in the picture. This will serve to fix the lesson in their minds in an agreeable and easy way. It is better not to show more than one picture at each lesson.

(5) Before leaving, it may be found useful to read out the subsequent lesson, that the children may know something of what they will hear again the next time they meet.

(6) Every lesson ought to begin with a short prayer, and to end with singing a hymn, or with some prayer. Singing a hymn brightens up the children. If they show signs of fatigue during the lesson, the Catechist may say, "You seem tired, let us sing a few verses of a hymn."

It is a great thing to get the children to pray earnestly, and the Catechist must not hesitate through shyness to set them the example. If he can call attention to some fact of our Lord's Life in the lesson, as a motive or reason for prayer, all the better. The prayer should not be too long.

HERBERT CARDINAL VAUGHAN,
Archbishop of Westminster.

*Archbishop's House,
Feast of the Holy Name, 1903.*

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¹ Should further illustrations be required, see *Catechism Made Easy*, two vols. in one cover for the convenience of catechists, Rev. H. Gibson (Burns and Oates), for the Stories to which reference is made at the end of the Lessons.

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¹ This subject is more fully treated in *Forgive us our Trespases*, 1s., Catholic Truth Society, 69, Southwark Bridge Road, S.E.

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